

## Message Text

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65-61

ACTION PM-03

INFO OCT-01 EUR-12 ISO-00 EB-07 COME-00 TRSE-00 MC-02

ACDA-05 AID-05 OMB-01 CIAE-00 H-02 INR-07 L-02

NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 PRS-01 SP-02 SS-15 USIA-06 /077 W

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R 181626Z APR 75

FM AMEMBASSY BRUSSELS

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 3691

SECDEF WASHDC

INFO AMEMBASSY BONN

AMEMBASSY COPENHAGEN

AMEMBASSY THE HAGUE

AMEMBASSY PARIS

AMEMBASSY OSLO

AMEMBASSY STOCKHOLM

C O N F I D E N T I A L BRUSSELS 03479

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: MASS, BE

SUBJECT: F-104 REPLACEMENT - BELGIAN GOVERNMENT INVOLVES PARLIAMENT  
IN ISSUE

REF: BRUSSELS 3451

SUMMARY. BELGIAN GOVERNMENT MOVED F-104 REPLACEMENT  
ISSUE TO PARLIAMENT APRIL 15 BY PRESENTING 26- PAGE DOSSIER  
TO A JOINT MEETING OF THE SENATE AND CHAMBER OF DEPUTIES  
COMMISSIONS OF NATIONAL DEFENSE. DOSSIER DID NOT INDICATE  
GOVERNMENT CHOICE AND ACTION IS NOT IN ITSELF EXPECTED  
TO HAVE ANY SIGNIFICANT RESULT EXCEPT AS PRELUDE TO  
CHAMBER CONSIDERATION OF DEFENSE BUDGET WHICH POSTPONED  
TO APRIL 23. GOVERNMENT DECISION TO MAKE PRESENTATION  
WAS PROBABLY RESULT OF TACTICAL CONSIDERATION - FIRST TO  
AVOID PUBLIC DEBATE IN PARLIAMENT IN CONTEXT OF DEFENSE  
BUDGET AND SECONDLY TO SHOW THAT OPPOSITION PARTIES ARE  
AS DIVIDED ON ISSUE AS ARE PARTIES IN GOVERNMENT COALITION.  
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IF THIS IS THE CASE, THE GOVERNMENT'S PLOY HAS SUCCEEDED

ON THE LATTER, BUT REPLACEMENT ISSUE IS ALMOST CERTAIN  
TO ARISE IN BUDGET DISCUSSION. END SUMMARY.

1. MOD VANDEN BOEYNANTS PRESENTED A DOSSIER, PREPARED  
BY MINISTRIES OF DEFENSE, FOREIGN AFFAIRS AND ECONOMIC  
AFFAIRS, TO MEMBERS OF THE NATIONAL DEFENSE COMMISSIONS  
PRIOR TO THEIR JOINT MEETING APRIL 15. FOREIGN OFFICE  
"NOTE" IN DOSSIER PRESENTED COMMISSIONS WAS NOT  
INTENDED BY FOREIGN MINISTER VAN ELSLANDE TO GO TO PARLIAMENT,  
WAS DOCTORED, AND HAS LED TO FRICTION BETWEEN MINISTRIES  
INVOLVED. DOSSIER ALS INCLUDED MOD VERSION OF CONSORTIUM  
STEERING COMMITTEE REPORT. CONSERVATIVE, CATHOLIC, PRO-  
GOVERNMENT LA LIBRE BELGIQUE WHICH PRESENTED SUMMARY OF  
DOSSIER, CHARACTERIZED IT AS REASONABLY ACCURATE AND  
OBJECTIVE BUT EMBASSY HAS NOTED SEVERAL IMPORTANT POINTS  
IN LLB SUMMARY WHICH ARE EITHER INACCURATE OR A DISTORTION  
OF FACTS. FOR EXAMPLE, PRICE DATA PRESENTED GIVES  
IMPRESSION THAT F-16 AND F-1 WOULD COST VITRUALLY THE SAME  
AND THAT EXCHANGE RATE FLUCTUATIONS MIGHT MAKE THE F-16  
MORE EXPENSIVE. IN ADDITION, THE REMARKS ON TRANSFER  
OF TECHNOLOGY SAY IT IS "LIMITED" FOR THE F-16 AND  
"UNLIMITED" FOR THE F-1, WHICH IS MISLEADING, TO SAY  
THE LEAST. (SOCIALIST DEPUTY TOLD US LLB ARTICLE IS  
FAIRLY COMPLETE EXCEPT FOR "CONFIDENTIAL" SECTIONS OF  
DOSSIER.) IT COVERED ALL ASPECTS OF REPLACEMENT ISSUE  
FROM NEED THROUGH MILITARY CAPABILITIES, COSTS,  
CO-PRODUCTION AND AN ANALYSIS OF POLITICAL FACTORS. ONLY  
NEW FACTOR IN DOSSIER IS STATEMENT IN SECTION ON VARIOUS  
PROGRAM OFFERS THAT, IN THE CASE OF A CONTRACT FOR THE  
F-1, A SEPARATE FRENCH-BELGIAN-DUTCH ACCORD WOULD BE  
NECESSARY COVERING IN EXTENSIVE DETAIL QUESTIONS OF FUTURE  
AERONQUTICAL COOPERATION. POINTS CITED IN THIS REGARD  
INCLUDE : (A) MUTUAL DEFINITION OF COMMON AEROSPACE  
REQUIREMENT; (B) COORDINATED PROGRAMS IN RESEARCH,  
DEVELOPMENT AND CONSTRUCTION; (C) CREATION OF A COMMON  
R AND D FUND; (D) THE DIVISION OF CONSTRUCTION AMONG THE  
SIGNATORIES ; (E) A COMMON COMMERCIAL POLICY ; (F) GRANTING  
PREFERENCES TO MATERIAL DEFINED, DEVELOPED AND BUILT IN  
COMMON ; (G) EXTENSION OF AGREEMENT ON MILITARY AERONAUTIC  
CONSTRUCTION TO CIVILIAN AERONAUTIC CONSTRUCTION; AND  
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(H) THE POSSIBLILITY OF EXTENDING TO OTHER EC-9 MEMBERS  
THE CHANCE TO JOIN WITH THE FRENCH, BELGIANS, AND DUTCH.

2. NATIONAL DEFENSE COMMISSIONS IN BELGIAN PARLIAMENT ARE  
NOT RPT NOT COMPARABLE TO ARMED SERVICES COMMITTEES IN  
U.S. CONGRESS. THEY ARE COMPOSED OF MEMBERS OF ALL PARTIES  
(EXCEPT COMMUNIST) BUT HAVE NO PROFESSIONAL STAFFS  
AND MEMBERS ARE NOT EXPERTS ON MILITARY MATTERS.

THEIR ROLE IS LARGELY CONSULTATIVE BUT THEY ARE EXPECTED TO MAKE A REPORT TO PARLIAMENT WHICH COULD FORM BASIS OF BUDGET DISCUSSION ON THIS ISSUE. HEADS OF COMMISSIONS (SENATE--DESCAMPS, PLP; CHAMBER -- CUDELL, BSP) WERE PREVIOUSLY ON RECORD AS PRO-MIRAGE, THOUGH CUDELL, AS A SOCIALIST, HAS BEEN FORCED TO WAFFLE IN ORDER ACCURATELY TO REFLECT SOCIALIST PARTY POSITION ON ENTIRE REPLACEMENT QUESTION.

3. DISCUSSION AT COMMISSION MEETINGS APRIL 15 16, AND 17 IN WHICH VANDEN BOEYNANTS AND VAN ELSLANDE PARTICIPATED PART-TIME, BROKE LITTLE NEW GROUND. SOCIALISTS USED OCCASION TO ATTACK GOVERNMENT ON PROCEDURAL GROUNDS WHICH CONSUMED MUCH TIME AND SERVED PARTIALLY TO COVER DISARRAY OF SOCIALISTS ON ISSUE OF WHETHER TO REPLACE F-104S AT ALL. HOWEVER, VAN ELSLANDE SAID THAT: (A) DURING WARSAW VISIT, BELGIANS EXPLORED WITH POLES POSSIBILITY THAT BELGIUM MIGHT ABANDON ACQUISITION OF REPLACEMENT AIRCRAFT IF POLES ABANDONED THEIR MIGS. POLES WERE SAID TO HAVE REFUSED THIS INVITATION (WHICH IS HARD TO TAKE SERIOUSLY EXCEPT AS INTERNAL POLITICAL PLOY TO UNDERCUT SOCIALIST OPPOSITION), ON BASIS OF THEIR WARSAW PACT COMMITMENTS. VAN ELSLANDE CONCLUDED IN PARLIAMENT THAT ARMS REDUCTION INITIATIVES ARE UNREALISTIC IF MADE ON A COUNTRY-TO-COUNTRY BASIS AND THAT THEY MUST BE PURSUED ON THE LEVEL OF ALLIANCES; (B) "UNKIND REACTIONS" CAN BE EXPECTED FROM COUNTRY LOSING PLANE ORDER AND "COMMISSION MEMBERS WERE LEFT WITH THE QUESTION OF WHOSE WRATH CAN MOST EASILY BE ABSORBED, THAT OF FRANCE OR THAT OF AMERICA . . ." FIRESTONE

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